

Secession Fever

In the winter of 1860–61, as secession fever swept the Southern United States, federal military and civilian installations were quickly seized by state authorities who later turned over control of these facilities to the Confederate government. Among the assets seized were more than 50 military installations (forts, arsenals, naval yards, etc.), more than 30 customs houses, more than 60 lighthouses, and more than 9,000 post offices. All of these locations had been paid for with Congressional appropriations. The people who maintained them were federal employees who were forced either to resign their position and move north, or become employees of the Confederate government. Nearly 10,000 facilities costing well over \$100 million in 1860—and worth at least \$40 billion today—were taken without provocation and served as the physical foundations of the government of the Confederate States of America.

“The Cost of Secession,” a digital map provided in DVD format to Illinois public and private school libraries and generously funded by JPMorgan Chase & Co., highlights the seizure of federal assets by seceding states and the massive financial strain this created for the U.S. This map also demonstrates how “secession fever” often outpaced secession politics as many locations were taken over before the states officially seceded.